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ABSTRACT

Black undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park who registered for the fall 1969 term, but not for the spring 1970 term were compared with Blacks who registered for both terms on 29 demographic and attitudinal items from the University Student Census. Thirteen percent of the Blacks were non-returnees, compared to 15 percent of all undergraduates. The results indicated that the Blacks who returned to their studies at the University have more self-confidence and higher expectations, feel more strongly that the University, and are more likely to live on campus and make use of its facilities than do non-returning Blacks. In other words, it is likely that the Blacks who stay in school have a strong self-concept and take a more realistic look at the University and adapt to it to achieve their own goals. (Author/AF)

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SUMMARY

Black undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park who registered for the fall 1969 term and who did not register for the spring 1970 term were compared with Blacks who did register for both terms on 29 demographic and attitudinal items from the University Student Census (USC). Thirteen percent of the Blacks were non-returnees, compared to 15% of all undergraduates. Results indicated that the Blacks who return to their studies at the University have more self confidence and higher expectations (Tables 4 and 5), feel more strongly that the University should influence social conditions (item 34, page 5), see more racism at the University (Table 3) and are more likely to live on campus and make use of its facilities (Table 2 and item 42, page 5), than do non-returning Blacks.

In other words, it could be that the Blacks who stay in school have a strong self concept and take a more realistic look at the University and adapt to it to achieve their own goals.. The importance of such variables has been noted by several other writers.

Despite the publicity and the apparent interest of the predominantly white universities in enrolling Black students, very few Blacks are entering these schools. In the fall of 1969 the median percent of Black freshmen in large, predominantly white institutions nationally was 3% (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970). Given that there are few Blacks in attendance at such schools, what variables are related to Blacks staying in these institutions? Evidence is virtually unavailable on this point. Generally there is a shortage of data available on variables associated with the success or failure of Black students. Katz (1969, p. 23) summarized it as follows: "Psychologists have contributed little to the understanding of the motivational problems of disadvantaged students. Scientific knowledge has barely advanced beyond the conventional wisdom of the teachers' lounge. In a sense, so few good data are available that virtually any competent foray into the area is bound to be fruitful." It is the purpose of this study to provide some data in this area.

The prediction of collegiate performance and attrition of students in general has been the subject of extensive research in the past. Despite this fact, it has been observed (Travers, 1949, and Stein, 1963) that there has been little increase in the effectiveness of prediction since 1940. To meet this need for more predictive effectiveness, the direction of research has moved into the area of socioeconomic and nonintellectual variables as predictors of collegiate performance and attrition (Summerskill, 1962; Stein, 1963; Atkinson, 1964; Katz, 1964; Pettigrew, 1964; Pervin, Reik, and Dalrymple, 1966; Cope, 1968; and Reed, 1968).

The present study developed from an interest in relating some of these non-intellectual and socioeconomic factors to Black student attrition. For

purposes of this study, "returnees" will be defined as those Black students at the University of Maryland (College Park) who registered for both the Fall 1969 and Spring 1970 semester. "Non-returnees" are those Black students who registered for the Fall 1969 semester but not for the Spring 1970 semester at the University (excluding graduates in January, 1970).

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways, if any, in which Black returning students are different from those not returning, on demographic and attitudinal variables.

Method

Data for this study were collected from the University Student Census* (USC) that was administered to nearly all full-time undergraduate students (9 credits or more) registering for the Fall 1969 semester. The sample used in this research was limited to all full-time Black undergraduate students who registered for the 1969-70 Fall and Spring semesters, and who completed the USC. The sample consisted of 500 Black students from a total of 582 Black undergraduates. Of the 82 students not included in the study, it is estimated that about 80 percent registered late and therefore did not take the USC. The research sample of 500 was divided into five student status groups: (1) New freshmen; (2) New transfer students; (3) Transfer students in an earlier semester; (4) Started as a new freshman at College Park in an earlier semester; and (5) An "other" category. A percentage breakdown on these five categories of student status by sex is given in Table 1.

Differences among groups on the first twenty-nine USC items were determined using chi-square. On the last 17 USC questions, the subjects were asked

* Available from the writers on request.

to indicate the extent to which they agreed with certain statements on a five point scale and t-tests were employed to determine significance. Comparisons were made of returnees and non-returnees by total group and within sex.

Results

A significant chi-square (.05 level) was found on only four of the first twenty-nine USC questions (see Tables 2 through 5). With the exception of these four questions, a great deal of similarity existed between returnees and non-returnees.

The first USC item of significance was number 4: the amount of impact the Student Course Guide* had upon the student's course selection. There was a significant difference found at the .05 level when all returnees were compared to all non-returnees and when female returnees were compared to female non-returnees (see Table 2). The greatest difference indicated in Table 2 is that while only 19% of the returning students declared the Student Course Guide had no impact upon their course selection, 34% of all non-returnees felt it had no impact. Although results were not significant, differences between male returnees and non-returnees were similar to those for the first two comparisons (i.e., for the no impact reponse, 18% of male returnees as opposed to 31% of the male non-returnees).

USC item 10, which asks the student why he feels there are few Black students at the University of Maryland, had a significant chi-square beyond the .05 level for all returnees vs. all non-returnees (see Table 3). Returnees felt more (67%) that racism was the reason Blacks did not attend the University

* The Student Course Guide is an evaluation of courses and instructors prepared by students.

compared to 47% of the non-returnees.

A significant difference beyond the .05 level was found on item 16 for the female returnees versus non-returnees (see Table 4). This item asks the student how much education he expects to get in his lifetime. The possible responses were combined to give results indicating: college but less than a bachelor's degree; a BA or equivalent; or one or more years of graduate work. In percentage terms, the most striking difference between female returnees and non-returnees was that 56% of the non-returnees expected to get a BA or less, and only 32% of the returnees made this response . In addition, while 35% of the female non-returnees indicated that they expected to complete one or more years of graduate school, 62% of the female returnees made this response.

The chi-square on USC item 21 showed a significant difference beyond .05 for all returnees versus all non-returnees; and for female returnees versus female non-returnees (see Table 5). This item is concerned with the most likely reason for the student's leaving before earning a degree. The most notable response difference was to the option "Absolutely certain I will obtain a degree;" 23% of all returning students (as opposed to 9% of all non-returning) gave this reply. Nineteen percent of the female returnees said they were absolutely certain of obtaining a degree; while only 5% of the female non-returnees made this choice.

On item 23 of the USC, the respondent is asked where he will live during that semester. Of the possible answers, 49% of the female returnees indicated that they would be living in a University residence hall, compared to 26% of the female non-returnees.

None of the comparisons between male returnees and male non-returnees on any of the first 29 USC items was significant.

The results of t-tests for all groups tested on the final seventeen items were in general not significant. However, four comparisons out of the total were significant beyond the .05 level. Item 34, which states that the University should use its influence to improve social conditions in the State, was found to be significant beyond the .05 level for all three group combinations. In each case, returnees were more in agreement with the statement than non-returnees. For item 42, the data suggest that female returnees felt more strongly than female non-returnees that many facilities and opportunities exist on campus for individual creative activities (.05 level).

Discussion

It was hypothesized that significant differences would be found between returning and non-returning Black students on a number of demographic and attitudinal variables. Generally returnees and non-returnees appeared similar on the variables examined in this study. However, there were some interesting differences between the two groups.

The picture which emerges is that the Blacks who returned to their studies at the University have more self confidence and higher expectations (Tables 4 & 5), feel more strongly that the University should influence social conditions (item 34, page 5), see more racism at the University (Table 3) and are more likely to live on campus and make use of its facilities (Table 2, and item 42, page 5) than do non-returning Blacks.

In other words, it could be that the Blacks who stay in school have a strong self concept and take a more realistic look at the University and adapt to it to achieve their own goals. The importance of such variables has been noticed by several other writers. Pfeifer and Sedlacek (1970) found that

self concept was an important variable in the success of Black students at the University of Maryland using grades as a criterion. Epps (1969) and Gurin, Lao and Beattie (1969) found that successful Black students tended to have high aspirations and feel that they had control over their lives.

The attrition figures for Blacks in this study (non-returnees, Spring semester) were 13% overall (10% males and 16% females). These figures compare with about 15%* for all College Park undergraduates in 1969 (non-returnees, Spring semester).

Several potential limitations of the study should be noted. Of course, the sample was drawn from a single university and only one definition of attrition was used. It may be that the results would be different in other samples or with different definitions of attrition (e.g. students leaving after a year or more, or those with low grades). However, students who leave in midyear may be an important group to examine; they may be more likely to have problems in adjusting to the University (e.g. expecting less racism than they found) and it may be possible to help or work with such students or, even better, to eliminate racism at the University.

Another methodological point is that the number of comparisons made increases the chances of a Type I error. This was not considered a major problem since the purpose of the study was to identify variables which deserved further study. Thus this study should be replicated and further refined.

* Source: Office of Institutional Research, University of Maryland.

Table 1.

Percentage Distribution of Black Students by Class

	New Freshmen	New Transfer	Transfers in Earlier Semester	New Freshmen in Earlier Semester	Other	Total*
I. All returnees (N=435)	37	8	6	29	20	100%
II..All non-returnees (N=65)	31	6	8	31	25	101%
III. Male returnees (N=226)	34	9	6	29	20	98%
IV. Male non-returnees (N=26)	35	8	8	27	23	101%
V. Female returnees (N=209)	39	7	5	30	19	100%
VI. Female non-returnees (N=39)	28	5	8	33	26	100%

* Percentages may not equal 100 because of rounding.

Table 2.

Percentage Response* for Black Students to Item 4 of the University Student Census
(What impact has the Student Course Guide had on your course selection?)

Response	(A) All Returnees	(B) All Non-returnees	(C) Female Returnees	(D) Female Non-returnees	(E) Male Returnees	(F) Male Non-returnees
Here less than a semester-does not apply	29	26	31	26	27	27
Great deal of impact	10	3	10	3	11	4
Some impact	21	20	20	28	23	8
Little impact	16	14	15	5	15	27
None at all	19	34	19	36	18	31
Other	5	3	5	2	6	3
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* (Significant differences beyond .05 using X^2 are AxB and CxD)

Table 3.

Percentage Response* for Black Students to Item 10 of the University Student Census
(What is the main reason you feel there are few Black students at the University of Maryland?)

Response	(A) All Returnees	(B) All Non-returnees	(C) Female Returnees	(D) Female Non-returnees	(E) Male Returnees	(F) Male Non-Returnees
Blacks prefer to go to black colleges	11	15	11	15	12	15
The University discourages them from coming because of its tough academic reputation	7	8	6	8	8	8
The University's racist practices discourage them from coming	27	15	32	15	23	15
The University's racist image discourages them from coming	40	32	40	31	40	35
Don't know	7	14	6	15	8	12
Other	8	15	5	15	9	15
TOTAL**	100%	99%	100%	99%	100%	100%

* Significant difference beyond .05 using X^2 is AxB

** All totals do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.

Percentage Response* for Black Students to Item 16 of the University Student Census
(How much education do you expect to get in your lifetime?)

Responses	(A) All Returnees	(B) All Non-returnees	(C) Female Returnees	(D) Female Non-returnees	(E) Male Returnees	(F) Male Non-returnees
College, but less than a Bachelor's degree	3	8	2	10	4	4
BA or equivalent	29	38	30	46	28	27
1 or 2 years of Grad. or Profess. studies	39	32	46	27	32	42
Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor or Educa.	12	8	9	8	15	8
Doctor of Medicine	6	2	5	0	6	4
Doctor of Dental Surgery	1	2	0	0	1	4
Bachelor of Law	3	2	1	0	5	4
Bachelor of Divinity	1	0	1	0	1	0
Other	6	9	6	10	8	8
TOTAL**	100%	101%	100%	101%	100%	101%

*(Significant difference beyond .05 using X^2 is CxD)
** All totals do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Table 5.

Percentage Response* for Black Students to Item 21 of the University Student Census (If you should leave the University without receiving a degree, which of the following do you think would be the most likely cause?)

Responses	(A) All Returnees	(B) All Non-returnees	(C) Female Returnees	(D) Female Non-returnees	(E) Male Returnees	(F) Male Non-returnees
Absolutely certain I will obtain a degree	23	9	19	5	26	15
To accept a good job	6	5	5	8	6	0
To enter military service	6	5	0	0	11	12
It would cost more than my family and I can afford	16	15	18	15	15	15
Marriage	11	11	19	18	4	0
Disinterested in study	5	5	5	8	5	0
Lack of academic ability	14	15	16	18	12	12
Insufficient reading or study skills	6	17	3	15	8	19
Other	13	18	13	13	13	27
TOTAL**	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* (Significant differences beyond .05 using X^2 are AxB and CxD)
** All totals do not equal 100 due to rounding .

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